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## Book Reviews

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Collected Writings on Chinese Culture*. By Tsuen-hsui Tsien. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011. Edited by the Committee Celebrating Professor T. H. Tsien's Centenary Birthday. James Cheng, Theodore Foss, Cho-yun Hsu, Leo Ou-fan Lee, Ming-sun Poon, Yuan Zhou and Tai-loi Ma, Chief Editor. xviii, 453.

To understand the development of East Asian libraries in the United States and much of Chinese studies in general during the twentieth century, one can hardly do better than read *Collected Writings on Chinese Culture*, a collection of selected writings by T.H. Tsien, carefully put together by a seven-member panel whose task it was to choose from among the more than 160 books, articles and book reviews written by Tsien. It includes writings spanning the 1940s to the early twenty-first century, some of them being translated from the Chinese. Very much in the tradition of *zaji*, where a single author collects genres and fields in one book, this sort of collection is not as common in English.

Prefaces by Edward L. Shaughnessy and Anthony C. Yu prepare the reader for the scope of the work and place Tsien as a central figure in Chinese studies, who succeeded in arriving in the United States on a mission to deliver rare books to the Library of Congress for safekeeping during the turbulent war years in China, and transformed himself into the leading bibliographer of Chinese studies in the U.S. and scholar of the history of books and printing recognized the world over, much published and translated.

For those people fortunate enough to have studied with Tsien, this work evokes his meticulous and systematic approach to the history of Chinese books, printing and libraries. The very reading of some of these essays is to be transported back to the seminar room in the Far Eastern Library at the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library to a lecture by Tsien.

Three sorts of essays make up the volume: (1) essays, some published and one a student paper, on a. ancient documents and writing, b. paper, ink and printing, c. interchange between sinologists in the east and west, as well as the role of libraries in this interchange; (2) biographies of eminent sinologists; and (3) reminiscences. A final section includes pieces by Chang Pao-San, Ming-Sun Poon, Bie Liqian, and one anonymous essay. There is also a bibliography of Tsien's scholarly works spanning eighty years, a list of illustrations, many of which are photographs that round out nicely one's understanding of Tsien as a man, a bibliography and an index.

Joseph Needham's remark from his review of the seminal *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, can be applied to Tsien's corpus as a whole: "The text is a model of clarity

and brevity.” (*Journal of Asian Studies*, 23:4 [Aug. 1964]:604) The sales and reprints of Tsien’s monographs are testaments to his very accessible yet erudite writing style. Tsien is masterful at accumulating points for his arguments until he wins over the reader to his argument with the sheer volume of evidence. This is also a book where one can be reminded of fascinating details such as the use of name cards on paper as early as the fifth to sixth centuries; or that by the end of the fifteenth century, China had written and printed more pages of text than the rest of the world combined. There is a wealth of information, especially in the first half of the book, now conveniently collected in one place. This convenience far outweighs the inevitable repetition that can be found across essays on the same topic.

It would have been helpful for the editors to date each piece in the volume, and outline their selection criteria for including articles in the book. There are a few awkward turns of phrase in the essays translated from the Chinese by others, and some Romanization inconsistencies; but in general it is an eminently readable and enlightening book.

I encourage readers to start with Tsien’s autobiography (pp. 272 to 345), where one gains an appreciation for all that Tsien accomplished against the backdrop of his family background, work in China and scholarship and teaching in the United States. Almost palpable is his devotion to his work and respect for his teachers, which help explain his highly distinguished career and the depth of his contributions to sinology and East Asian libraries.

Tsien suggests that the focus of future research be on cultural factors in printing history, a most welcome indication that Tsien is still creating and making his influence felt.

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***China Encyclopedia.*** By China Encyclopedia Compilation Group. Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2008. 877 pp. ¥1280 (cloth). ISBN 978-7-5085-1385-0

*China Encyclopedia* is a reference book of modern China aimed at satisfying the needs of both China specialists and general readers outside China. The book’s twenty chapters encompass twenty subject areas such as history, state system, national defense, religion, economy, education, environmental protection, internet, culture and sports.

The Ethnic Group chapter provides section by section descriptions of the fifty-six ethnic groups of China, including the people, the language, the culture and

each group's traditions. The section on government principles in dealing with ethnic group issues and the coverage of five autonomous regions, such as Tibet Autonomous Region, Xinjing Uygur Autonomous Region and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, will prove to be fundamental resources for scholars wanting a holistic understanding of Chinese ethnic group conflicts and coexistence.

Chapter 20, the Sports Chapter, is approximately one fifth of the entire book, an indication that China has entered a new age. Its organization furthermore reflects that fact that it was compiled in the year China hosted the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The chapter traces China's Olympic history back to 1908 when *Tianjin Youth Daily* asked the question "When will China host an Olympic Games?" In 1945 a proposal was made, but set aside in favor of China bidding to host the 1952 Olympic Games. The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games was in fact a 100 year dream come true. Coverage of other sports includes ping pong diplomacy, the first Chinese student to America studying sports in 1924, the earliest extant Chinese sports textbook published in 1900, the 1929 law of the Republic on physical culture and sports, and the 1995 Nationwide Fitness Plan. The full coverage of every aspect of Chinese sports easily makes it a complete sports handbook on its own.

Equally rich in content is Chapter 7, on the Chinese Economy, which makes up one-eighth of the book. The chapter, approximately one hundred pages long (pp. 69-163), is divided into eight categories. Major topics of interest are agriculture, industry, transportation, finance as well as foreign trade and utilization of foreign funds. The chapter begins with the 11<sup>th</sup> five-year plan (2006-2010), and moves on to energy resources. The inception and completion of Three Gorges Project, the petroleum and natural gas industry, and the introduction of the four nuclear power plants at Daya Bay, Qinhan, Tianwan and Ling'ao are all the subject of research questions and projects for China scholars, as are the privatization of the first railways in 2006, foreign banking in China, and conducting business in RMB. Intellectual property right and copyright issues are also addressed in this chapter, and laws and regulations on network copyright protection and international cooperation on piracy receive detailed treatment.

The chapter on Education includes discussion of such topics as higher education for the handicapped, unheard of 25 years ago, Chinese government scholarships for international students studying in China as well as scholarships for foreign teachers of Chinese language, and entrance examination and admission of foreign students and their visa application process. Prestigious programs calling for global collaboration in advanced research such as the 111 Project, Project 211 and the State Yangtze Scholar Award Program are all well covered in the Education chapter. The chapter on the Internet includes useful compilations of website addresses of government and non-government organizations, such

as [www.fmprc.gov.cn](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and [www.humanrights.cn](http://www.humanrights.cn) (China Society for Human Rights Studies). This chapter also lists websites for portals, blogging, instant messaging, search engines like [www.baidu.com](http://www.baidu.com), and video or movie sharing sites like [www.tudou.com](http://www.tudou.com). *China Encyclopedia*, with its comprehensive coverage, and the succinct overview of each topic, presents the reader with a multifaceted China.

Good as the book is, it could have been better. The history chapter, chapter 3, is unbelievably brief. The whole of Chinese history from the fossils of Yuanmou Man of a million years ago found in Yunnan Province to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 is covered in only 14 pages (pp. 16-29). Concisely and succinctly, Sun Wu, the writer of *The Art of War* on ancient military strategies, Confucius and Laozi, the philosophers, Cai Lun, the pioneer in paper making, and Zhang Heng, who invented the seismoscope to study earthquakes, are all adequately introduced. But if one is looking for information on popular contemporary Chinese politicians, either from the Communist Party or the National Party, one would be greatly disappointed. Nowhere in the table of contents or in the index sections at the back of the book are found any household names of modern-day politicians, such as Mao Zedong or Chiang Kai-shek, except Sun Yat-sen. Information on these giants of modern times is as essential as coverage of those long gone.

Since 1980s China's publishing business has been booming. Book distribution centers have sprung up everywhere, and both printed and e-books are found in every Chinese home. Unfortunately not a page of this hefty book touches upon the publishing industry. There is not a single mention of publishers or booksellers, not even online booksellers. As a librarian I sincerely hope that the publishing industry is incorporated in the next edition of the book.

The difference between language expressions and concepts poses a challenge for both the translators and readers of the *China Encyclopedia*. In a few instances the meaning of the English text is perplexing. For example, in describing Xi'an Translation University, the English text reads, "The university has under it five secondary colleges and a fine arts department, containing almost 60 subjects at undergraduate and college level." (p.215) It is not easy to figure out the exact meaning of "secondary colleges" and "undergraduate and college level." The Chinese text is: "西安翻译学院下设五个二级学院及一个艺术系, 开设近 60 个本、专科专业。" (p.164) Some conspicuous errors can be attributed to negligent proofreading or typesetting, for example the sentence "From 1978 to the end of, some 1,067 million Chinese went to study abroad, and 275,000 came back." (p.221) A check of the Chinese version quickly revealed that it should be "From 1978 to the end of 2006, some 1.067 million Chinese went to study abroad, 275,000 came back." (p.169) In spite of these minor inadequacies, *China Encyclopedia* stands out as one

of the best China reference books on the market. It is user-friendly, with an alphabetically arranged index and a table of contents by subject areas. Many colorful photographs complement the text.

*China Encyclopedia* contains a wealth of information. It is a fundamental tool for those desiring to understand and appreciate modern China. Have a copy in your library, or even for your own bookshelf. It is a handy reference work to consult for information on China, as well as a pleasant piece for leisure reading.

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